on the eve of the Transport and Communication Decade (1997);

(b) If so, the details thereof including estimated expenditure to be mobilised by Government and other UN agencies;

(c) Whether this would facilitate rural areas in the region through development of connections with important business and urban centres; and

(d) If so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) to (d) ALTID consists of Asian Highway Network (AH) and Trans Asian Roadways (TAR) and it is part of the Transport and Communication Decade Phase-II (1992-96) of ESCAP. India supports the expeditious completion of both the projects. The Trans-Asian Railway Project has been recommended for detailed study by the specialized agencies. The ALTID project is expected to be cost efficient and will facilitate movement of traffic across the nations and this would help rural economy as well. The need of mobilisation of funds would arise after completion of studies.

Handing over of Rural Telephone Exchanges to Private Operators in Andhra Pradesh

17. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to hand over rural telephone exchanges in Andhra Pradesh to private operators;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government propose to improve basic phone services in Andhra Pradesh; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) (1) All the electromechanical exchanges which have higher fault liability are proposed to be replaced by State of Art Digital Electronic exchanges for better quality of services.

(2) All out efforts are being made to upgrade the external plant with the introduction of ducts, use of Jelly filled cables and rehabilitation of overhead lines etc.

(3) All worn out telephone instruments are planned to be replaced with good quality push button instruments.

(4) Digital Trunk Automatic Exchanges (TAXs) are Planned for to meet the growing demand for STD/ISD.

Operation of CT.B.T.

18. SHRI ASHOK MITRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that, without India's concurrence, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty cannot be made operational;

(b) whether pressure has been mounted on Indian Government by a number of foreign powers to sign the agreement by invoking the so-called entry into force clause; and

(c) whether there is a proposal to approach the International Court of Justice in defence of our national interests?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL): (a) Article XIV of the CTBT states that the CTBT will enter into force 180 days after the date of deposit of the instruments of ratification by all 44 countries listed in Annex 2 of the Treaty. These 44 countries include India.

(b) India has remained undeterred on its principled and consistent stand on the CTBT which enjoys national consensus. We have conveyed our opposition to article XIV on the Entry into Force, which is also country to inernational legal norms. There has been no pressure on Government to sign the CTBT by invoking the Article on the Entry into Force clause.

(c) At present, we are not considering any proposal to approach the International Court of Justice.